

Pay it Forward:

A hands-on approach to student philanthropy

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Introduction to Student Philanthropy

Student philanthropy is defined as “an experiential learning approach that provides students with the opportunity to study social problems and nonprofit organizations, and then make decisions about investing funds in them” (Olberding, 2009, p. 463).

- Emerged across higher education institutions (Olberding, Neikirk, & Ng, 2010; Astin & Sax, 1998)
- Indirect and direct (Olberding, 2009; Olberding et al., 2010)

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Purpose of Study

To examine the experience of students in philanthropy courses through Pay it Forward (PIF), a federally-funded initiative addressing critical needs in campus communities through student-led grantmaking and volunteerism.

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Research Questions

- What is the relationship between participation in a PIF course and student confidence about philanthropic activities?
- What is the relationship between participation in a PIF course and student perception about future philanthropic activities?

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Pay it Forward: Overview

- \$1.4 million initiative of Ohio, Kentucky, and Michigan Campus Compacts
 - 34 universities and 120 courses (\$5,000/course)
 - Research partnership with Sillerman Center at Brandeis
- Goals:
 - To address critical needs in community through student-led grantmaking
 - Provide service-learning opportunities to bridge campuses and communities
 - Identify community needs through interviews and site-visits to local nonprofits
 - Issue and evaluate RFPs to make charitable awards

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Pay it Forward: Methodology

- Time frame
 - Spring 2010 – present
- Student Surveys
 - 1,628 from over 120 courses across various disciplines (e.g., business, arts and humanities, and health)
- Instructor Surveys
 - 111 surveys (some classes co-taught)



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Student Demographics

Variable Name	N	Percent
Gender		
Male	534	34.3%
Female	1022	65.6%
Transgender	2	0.1%
Member of faith-based community?		
Yes	1019	66.1%
No	523	33.9%
Parent has a BA or higher?		
Yes	763	49.3%
No	786	50.7%
Race/Ethnicity*		
White/Caucasian	1276	81.8%
Black/African American	177	11.4%
Latino/Hispanic	75	4.8%
Asian American/Asian/Pacific Islander	40	2.6%

* Respondents had an opportunity to select more than one race, so percentages may equal more than 100%.

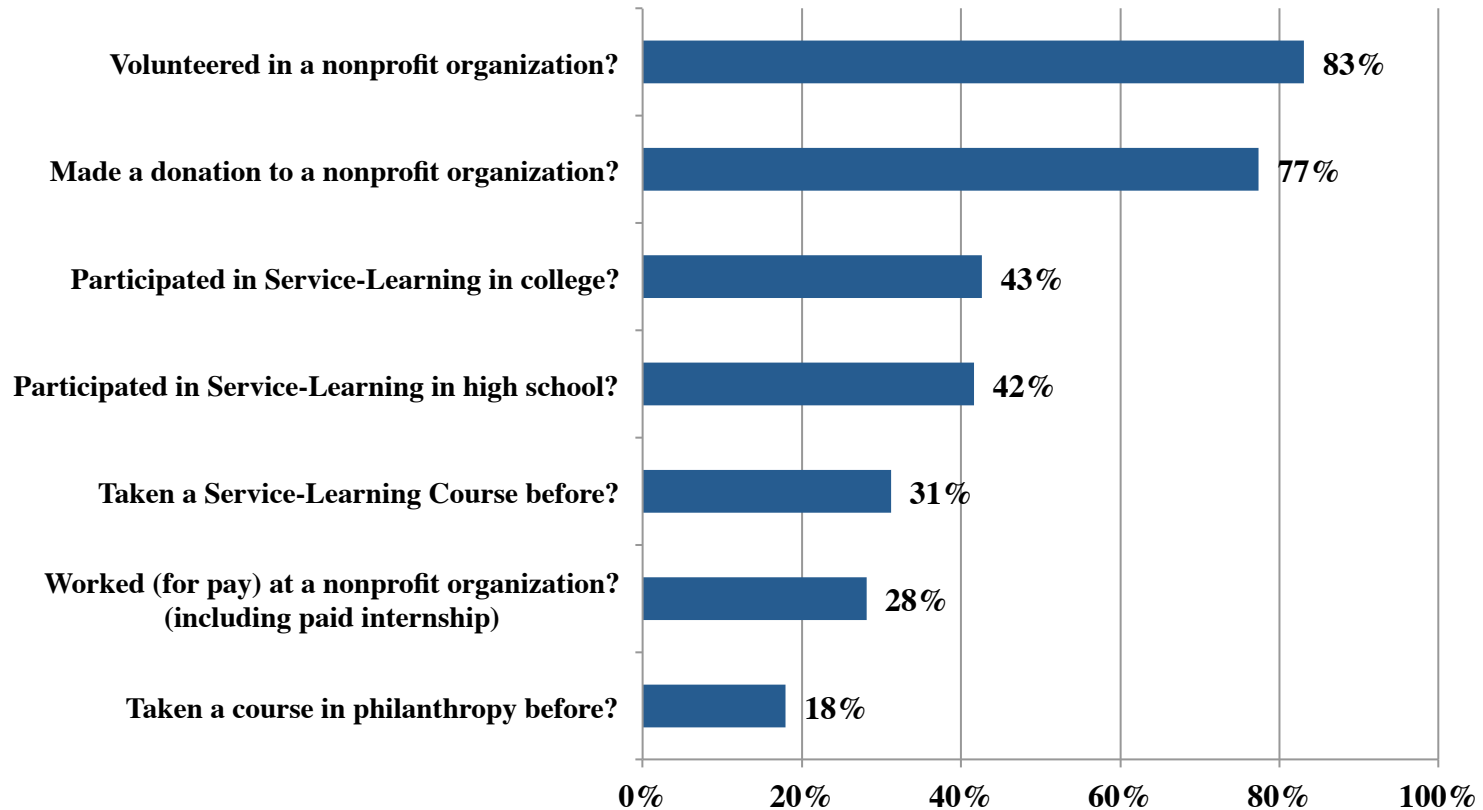
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Student Prior Experience



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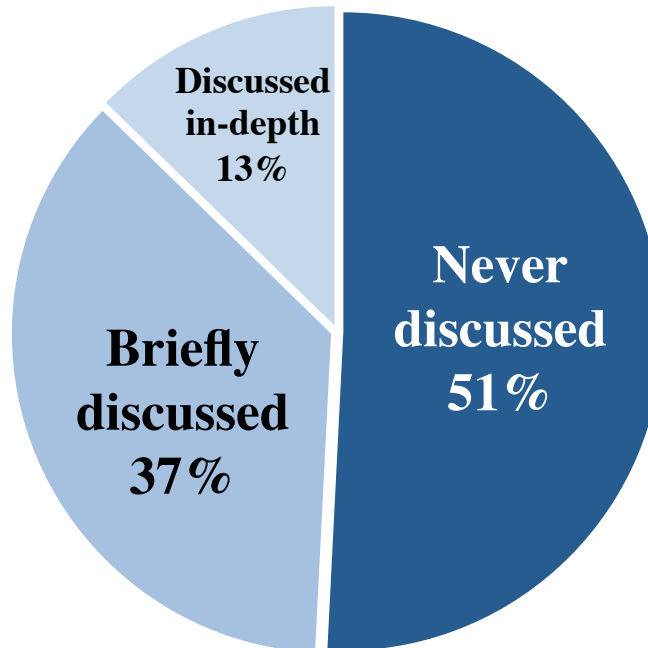
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Prior Discussions about Philanthropy

**Prior to taking this course, did your parent discuss their
volunteer work/philanthropy with you?**



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Pay it Forward Course



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Pay it Forward Course

Visits to Nonprofit Being Considered for Grant

Number of visits	Percent
0	21%
1	24%
2-3	25%
4+	30%

Time Spent on Philanthropy Project in PIF Course

Time on Project	Percent
Less than 25% of time	23%
25-49% of time	40%
50-75% of time	27%
More than 75% of time	11%

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Pay it Forward Course

Measure of Class Engagement

- Created an engagement scale ranging from “practically never” to “very often” that measured how often students had the following experiences in their philanthropy course:
 - opportunity to learn by doing
 - felt like made a contribution
 - freedom to develop and use own ideas
 - had real responsibilities and challenging tasks
 - made important decisions
 - had a variety of tasks to do at the site

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Confidence after Pay it Forward

- Created a confidence scale ranging from “not at all confident” to “very confident” that measured knowledge or abilities in the philanthropic sector after PIF course.
- The 17 confidence questions touched upon:
 - The role of the nonprofit sector in the local community
 - How to identify issues and challenges facing local communities
 - How to measure the impact of nonprofit programming on community needs
 - To articulate a community/educational need through public presentation, grantwriting, or other fundraising strategy

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Relationship Between Course Activities and Confidence

Variable Name	B	Std. Error	t	Sig
Gender	-.069	.029	-2.40	.017
Faith	.001	.028	.003	.978
Parent education	-.044	.027	-1.61	.109
Race	-.066	.036	-1.83	.067
Taken a prior course in philanthropy	.146	.035	4.12	.000
Participated in service learning in high school	.052	.027	1.90	.057
Made a donation to a nonprofit organization	.060	.032	1.86	.063
Parent discussed philanthropy in-depth or briefly	.075	.028	2.68	.007
Made an initial contact to nonprofit (e.g., call, email)	-.001	.029	-0.05	.962
Made a donation to at least one nonprofit being considered	.021	.030	0.69	.488
Served as a group leader/co-leader	.061	.030	2.06	.039
Coordinated the visit of a nonprofit to speak to the class	-.043	.037	-1.14	.256
Did research into an issue area	.089	.033	2.69	.007
Helped develop selection criteria for awarding grants	.042	.029	1.45	.147
Made plans to volunteer at a nonprofit next term	.040	.030	1.34	.182
Assisted in writing the grant proposal on behalf of an organization	.064	.028	2.30	.022
Had direct contact with nonprofits	.144	.034	4.20	.000
Number of visits made to a nonprofit being considered for an award	.003	.004	0.90	.370
Percent of in-class time spent on philanthropy project	.052	.015	3.50	.000
Engagement scale	.219	.017	12.88	.000

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Future Philanthropic and Volunteer Activity

Variable Name	Decrease/No change	Increase
Future giving		
Give money to local nonprofits after graduation	53%	47%
Seek out nonprofits to give money to that reflect values	54%	46%
Give money to campus after graduation	68%	32%
Future volunteering		
Volunteer after graduation	54%	46%
Plan to volunteer or engage in philanthropic activities throughout lifetime	50%	50%
Future talking about philanthropic or volunteer activities		
Talk with peers about giving	50%	50%
Talk with family about giving	52%	48%
Future work/employment in the nonprofit sector		
Pursue work in the nonprofit sector after graduation	56%	44%
Seek employment in an organization or corporation that values volunteer service	58%	42%

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Relationship Between Course Activities and Future Philanthropic Activity

- Assessed relationship between course activities and perception of future philanthropic activities
 - Largely, individual activities were not significantly related to perception of future philanthropic activities
 - Stronger course engagement was linked to greater perception of future philanthropic activities, including: increased aspirations to volunteer, to donate, and to work in nonprofit settings

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Limitations

- Post-test only
- Generalizability: only includes three states
- Bias
 - Selection
 - Social desirability
- Self-reported data

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Summary of Findings

- College students begin the course with a variety of backgrounds and prior philanthropic experiences
- Specific course activities are linked to increased confidence in a range of philanthropic activities
- Greater classroom engagement is linked to increased perceptions of future philanthropic activity

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Implications for Student Philanthropy and Future Research

- The field of student philanthropy can benefit from continued assessment of the relationship between course components and outcomes
- Our findings suggest a need for future research and continued funding of student philanthropy courses

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